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Farm Labor

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SMALLEST NUMBER OF WORKERS HANDLE RECORD 1962 CROPS FARM WAGE RATES ADVANCE TO NEW RECORD

Although there were three percent fewer persons working on farms in 1962 than a year earlier, total crop production equalled the 1960 record. The total number working on farms in the 12 monthly survey periods in 1962 averaged 6,751,000 persons, a new low. The number of farm family workers averaged 4,934,000 persons, 3 percent below the previous year. The number of hired workers averaged 1,817,000 persons, 4 percent under 1961. Averages for both family and hired workers reached new lows in 1962, continuing the downtrend which has been in progress for many years.

The number of persons working on farms in the survey week December 22-29, 1962, is estimated at 4,959,000 workers. Of this total, 4,057,000 persons were farm operators or members of their families. A total of 902,000 hired workers were employed. For December both family workers and hired workers were at record low levels by a slight margin.

Farm Wage Rates Rise Moderately to New Highs

Farm wage rates on January 1, 1963 averaged 2 percent higher than a year earlier, reaching a U.S. average for the composite rate of 94.8 cents per hour. The index of this composite rate reached 663 percent of the 1910-14 base.

Annual averages of wage rates for 1962 showed moderate and consistent gains over last year by States and by hiring arrangements. The U.S. composite reflecting all reported rates averaged 85.6 cents per hour. The annual index of the composite rate reached 658 percent of the 1910-14 base. These measures exceeded 1961 by between 2 and 3 percent. All of the farm wage rates reported represent cash wages only, exclusive of values of other items furnished hired workers. The rates reported represent wages paid on farms of crop and livestock reporters or in their localities, for the hiring arrangements specific.

Monthly Worker Totals Show Changing Demands

The record of estimates of number of workers by States for the entire year shown on pages 5, 6, and 7 shows much variation in the size of the working force in monthly periods, by States, and also in the part played by hired labor and farm family workers. The total working force reached the highest level of the year nationally in September when the cotton harvest in many southern

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sections added to many other demands for field, fruit, and vegetable crops. However, in most North Central States June and July were big months. In the South Atlantic Region, July and August were months of largest employment, with tobacco work making heavy demands. In South Central regions, the September survey period was largest. The Mountain region had a remarkably even level of total workers in the June-September periods. Pacific States showed great variation in times of largest labor demand, but reached the largest total in September due to the dominance of certain California harvest work for many crops.

The continuing dominance of the number of family workers in the total farm work force reflects the continuing importance of the Nation's "family farms". Farm families long have been the underlying basis for much of the amazing increase in production per worker. Between 1945--end of World War II--and 1961 the number of persons supplied farm products by one farm worker nearly doubled, rising from 14.55 persons in 1945 to 27.43 in 1961.

The annual crop summary issued in mid-December showed total crop production equalling the previous record set in 1960, with record yields per acre for many crops offsetting acreage reductions. Total crop acreage was 3 percent smaller than in 1961.

Several crops with relatively high labor use showed larger production in 1962 than in the previous year. These included cotton--up 3 percent; tobacco--up 10%; sugarcane for sugar--up 12%; and sugar beets--up 3%. Non-citrus fruit production was 6 percent above average, although slightly under 1961. This group of crops included a record sour cherry crop and the second largest crop of cranberries. However, apple and peach crops were slightly smaller than in 1961. The tonnage of twenty fruit crops was 2 percent larger than in the year before. Fresh vegetable production was slightly under 1961, although 4 percent above average. Processed vegetables reached record tonnage.

December Freeze in South-East Brings Labor Changes for Citrus and Winter Vegetables

The results of the freeze which swept into the deep south in mid-December illustrate the constant chance and change which is a part of farming. Harvest of the large Florida citrus crop was increasing when the freeze hit, bringing heavy damage to citrus fruits and many Florida vegetable plantings. An embargo was placed on shipments of fresh citrus until damage could be assessed and standards safeguarded. All available labor turned to harvesting oranges for processing. This work progressed at the rate of over 6 million boxes of oranges in a week. Grapefruit harvest also was heavy. Many vegetable plantings were killed by the freeze with consequent loss of labor demand pending replanting and time for growing new vegetable crops.

December conditions were not generally unfavorable in most parts of the country but farm activity reached the usual winter low with time out for Christmas trips and visits which were part of finishing a good farm work year.

Farm employment and indexes, December 1962, with comparisons, United States

	: Annual:	Annual:	Annual :	December:	December:	December:
	: average:	average:	average :	average :	24-30::	23-29
	: 1962 :	1961 :	1957-61 1/:	1956-60 1/:	1961	1962
FARM EMPLOYMENT						
(Thousands)						
Total	6,751	6,990	7,319	5,451	5,071	4,959
Family labor	4,934	5,104	5,413	4,510	4,142	4,057
Hired labor	1,817	1,886	1,906	941	929	902
INDEXES 2/						
(1910-14=100)						
Total	50	52	54	57	53	52
Family labor	49	50	53	56	51	50
Hired labor	53	55	56	62	61	59
(1957-59=100)						
Total	90	94	97	103	96	93
Family labor	89	91	97	102	93	91
Hired labor	92	96	97	107	107	103

1/ Employment during the last full calendar week ending at least one day before the end of the month.

2/ Monthly indexes are adjusted for seasonal variation.

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Farm Wage Rates and Indexes, January 1, 1963. United States

	: Annual :	January :	Jan. 1, :	Jan. 1,
	: average :	average :	1962 :	1963
	: 1962 :	1957-61 :	1962 :	1963
FARM WAGE RATES				
Composite rate per hour 1/	\$ 0.856	\$ 0.852	\$ 0.932	\$ 0.948
Per month with house	200.00	183.00	200.00	205.00
Per month with board and room	155.00	145.00	158.00	161.00
Per week with board and room	37.00	33.50	35.75	36.25
Per week without board and room ...	47.75	43.75	47.75	48.00
Per day with house	5.60	5.10	5.60	5.70
Per day with board and room	6.70	6.00	6.40	6.60
Per day without board or room	6.90	6.30	6.70	6.80
Per hour with house92	.77	.85	.88
Per hour without board or room	1.01	1.02	1.11	1.13
INDEXES 2/				
(1910-14=100)	658	600	652	663
(1957-59=100)	112	103	112	114

1/ Weighted average of all rates on a per hour basis.

2/ Indexes are adjusted for seasonal variation.

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